

## DEPARTMENT OF WATER RESOURCES

1416 NINTH STREET, P.O. BOX 942836  
SACRAMENTO, CA 94236-0001  
(916) 653-5791



July 1, 1999

Honorable Jim Costa  
Member of the Senate  
State Capitol, Room 5100  
Sacramento, California 95814

Honorable Mike Machado  
Member of the Assembly  
State Capitol, Room 5136  
Sacramento, California 95814

Last week, the Department of Water Resources and the Bureau of Reclamation were before you to discuss the very important issues of delta smelt and water supplies for the State Water Project and the Central Valley Project. At the hearing, you asked that we report to you on the actions we are taking to minimize impacts to water users. This letter is our response to your request.

During the hearing, we identified three principle problems needing to be addressed: (1) potential shortage of water south of the Delta that could affect agriculture deliveries immediately; (2) increasing water quality and quantity problems associated with the reduction of storage in San Luis Reservoir; and (3) potential impacts to next year's water supply due to continued reductions in exports.

#### Immediate Problem

The first problem has been averted. Through the hard work of stakeholders and agency staff, we have:

1. Increased exports from the Delta. During the week of June 21, in consultation with the Fish and Wildlife Service, the Bureau of Reclamation increased CVP pumping to its maximum capability and on Friday, June 25, DWR increased SWP pumping by about 1,100 cfs. We are now focusing our efforts on additional incremental increases in SWP pumping. This increase in pumping means the projects will have more flexibility in meeting immediate demands.

2. Rescheduled SWP and CVP operations. In addition to increasing the available water supplies, we have also reduced the amount of water required to be pumped over the Tehachapi Mountains to meet deliveries in Southern California. Since June 18, 1999, some SWP demands in Southern California began being met using Castaic Lake storage. This change decreased those demands by about 10,000 acre-feet.

#### San Luis Reservoir Low Point Problem

We are close to resolving the San Luis Reservoir low point problem. To address this problem, we focused on refining CVP and SWP delivery requests and identifying ways to increase supply during July and August. The CALFED Ops Group, as well as project managers and water contractors, worked collaboratively to identify these potential solutions. No doubt, this hard work paid off and while many of the actions may not be needed this year, they may prove valuable if a similar problem materializes in the future. A more detailed discussion of these actions follows.

1. Refine July and August operations and delivery requests. As discussed above, project operators and water users are scrutinizing and updating projections for CVP and SWP operations and water demands in July and August. It is possible the resulting estimates for deliveries will be less than earlier estimates. Regardless of the outcome, it is essential that water deliveries for this period be estimated to the very best of our ability. Implementing this action has significantly reduced the risk of impacts associated with low storage in San Luis Reservoir.
2. Borrow water from water users. Water users south of the Delta would temporarily switch to local supplies to reduce the demand on water from San Luis Reservoir. Borrowing water from water users would reduce demand on releases from San Luis Reservoir during the peak irrigation season, thus, aiding our efforts to avoid a low point problem. In most cases, the borrowed water must be paid back after September 1, 1999. In total, these actions would result in up to 227,000 acre-feet of water being borrowed.
  - Santa Clara Valley Water District SCVWD would use up to 25,000 acre-feet of local water supplies prior to September 1, 1999 in lieu of drawing on its CVP water supplies in San Luis Reservoir. These local supplies are part of the District's reserve to be used in the event of drought or emergencies. Therefore, an equal amount of water would be returned to SCVWD after September 1, 1999. At least 11,000 acre-feet would be returned prior to the end of the

calendar year. In addition, SCVWD would be reimbursed for the incremental costs of using the local supplies.

- San Joaquin River Exchange Contractors SJREC would switch to groundwater pumping prior to September 1, 1999. This would allow for "pre-delivery" of approximately 17,000 acre-feet of Level IV refuge water supplies. SJREC has committed to provide these Level IV refuge water supplies under a negotiated agreement with the Bureau of Reclamation, therefore, no additional costs would occur. After September 1, 1999, 17,000 acre-feet of San Luis Reservoir storage would be delivered to SJREC.
- Friant Water Users, Lower Tule and Pixley Water Districts and San Joaquin River Exchange Contractors Lower Tule and Pixley Water Districts would release up to 35,000 acre-feet from Millerton Reservoir. Flow in the San Joaquin River would be increased, allowing the SJREC to divert about 20,000 acre-feet of the water from the river. An equal amount of water would then be returned to Lower Tule and Pixley Water Districts from San Luis Reservoir using the Cross-Valley Canal. It may be possible to schedule some of these deliveries after September 1, 1999.
- Metropolitan Water District of Southern California MWDSC would utilize up to 50,000 acre-feet of its SWP Monterey Flexible Storage Account in Castaic and Perris Reservoirs prior to September 1, 1999. This would reduce MWD's use of storage in San Luis Reservoir by an equal amount. As is the case with the SCVWD's re-operation, the water would be returned to MWD after September 1, 1999 and incremental costs associated with using local supplies would be reimbursed.
- Kern County Groundwater Substitution Four water agencies participating in groundwater substitution programs in Kern County water would delay recharging up to 105,000 acre-feet of water until after September 1, 1999. As a result, Kern County water users would pump groundwater in lieu of using the water agencies' surface water supplies. Water would either be returned to the agencies from storage in San Luis Reservoir prior to the end of the calendar year, or excess San Joaquin flows from Friant would be made available during a five-year period. Kern County water users would be reimbursed for the incremental costs of using groundwater.

- Mendota Pool Landowners near the Mendota Pool would pump 10,000 acre-feet of groundwater into the Mendota Pool prior to September 1, 1999 to meet demands normally satisfied by San Luis Reservoir. The pumped groundwater would be credited to the landowners' San Luis Reservoir supplies after September 1, 1999 and prior to the end of the contract year (February 2000). The water could also be rescheduled to the subsequent year.
3. Use CVP and SWP operational flexibility. We have instructed staff to identify, and where appropriate, begin implementing operations that can increase CVP and SWP flexibility for meeting demands.

- Increase Banks pumping capability. The SWP exports water from the Delta into Clifton Court Forebay that leads to the Banks Pumping Plant. In 1986, DWR expanded Banks Pumping Plant, providing a total pumping capability of about 10,300 cfs (prior to 1986, the facility was able to pump about 6,400 cfs). In order to operate the additional pumps, DWR agreed to limit pumping during most of the year to 6400 cfs. During the wet season, however, pumping is allowed to go higher. This agreement is with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, who is concerned about potential navigation problems resulting from the higher pumping.

DWR is working with the Corps, the fishery agencies, and in-Delta agricultural stakeholders to obtain approval to increase pumping during the last part of July and August. This would allow the SWP to transfer another 8,000 acre-feet of water from northern storage into San Luis Reservoir. We believe we can minimize impacts on water levels in the South Delta and protect agricultural users during those months by fully operating three rock barriers located in Middle River, Old River near Tracy, and the eastern end of Grantline Canal.

- Re-operate Del Valle Reservoir. Del Valle Reservoir is part of the South Bay Aqueduct which provides water to the South Bay region. Normally, the Reservoir storage is drawn down by about 15,000 acre-feet in preparation for storing local runoff. Shifting part of the draw down operation from the fall to July and August would increase the amount of water that could be conveyed from the Delta to San Luis Reservoir. About 3,000 acre-feet could be made available before September 1, 1999 without causing local recreational problems.

### Long Term Problem

Once we have solved the low point problem, we will focus our efforts on developing actions to address the third problem, a potential reduction in next year's allocations. We do have a start; this spring, the Bureau of Reclamation prepared an environmental assessment to acquire water from Oakdale and South San Joaquin Irrigation Districts and from Yuba County Water Agency. The purpose of acquiring these water supplies is to meet high-priority fish and wildlife needs. However, once the water has served its purpose, it will contribute to the overall inflow to the Delta, improving water quality in the South Delta and decreasing the need for the CVP and SWP to release additional water to meet water quality. Increasing project storage upstream reduces the risk and magnitude of an impact to next year's allocations. These two acquisitions could add up to 125,000 acre-feet. There are several other actions that can be implemented to recover water for next year's allocations:

1. Purchase water from water users south of the Delta. Purchasing water would reduce the potential for a reduction in next year's water allocation because water would remain in San Luis Reservoir instead of being used to meet demands. Two sources have been identified that could provide up to 32,000 acre-feet of water.
  - Kern Water Bank Authority KWBA would sell up to 25,000 acre-feet of water stored in the Kern Water Bank. This water would be used to meet demands along the California Aqueduct that normally would be met from San Luis Reservoir.
  - SJREC SJREC would sell up to 8,000 acre-feet of groundwater supplies for wildlife refuges south of the Delta. These refuge supplies are normally provided from CVP storage in San Luis Reservoir. By acquiring the water from the SJREC prior to September 1, 1999, San Luis Reservoir storage would remain higher.
2. Substitute groundwater in Kern County. This action would involve about 50,000 acre-feet of the 105,000 acre-feet mentioned previously and would be returned within five years. Replacement would be accomplished using releases made during high flow period from Millerton Reservoir.

Honorable Jim Costa, et al  
July 1, 1999  
Page 6

We are committed to resolving the serious conflict between delta smelt and water supply. We are confident that the efforts by State and federal agencies and stakeholders will enable us to succeed. If you have any questions concerning this matter, please call Thomas M. Hannigan at (916) 653-7007 or Kirk Rodgers at (916) 978-5000. You can also have your staff contact Kathy Kelly at (916) 653-1099 or Steve Hirsch at (916) 978-5010.

Sincerely,



Thomas M. Hannigan  
Director  
Department of Water Resources  
State of California



Kirk C. Rodgers  
Acting Regional Director  
Mid-Pacific Region  
Bureau of Reclamation  
U. S. Department of the Interior

cc: Honorable Mary Nichols  
Secretary for Resources  
The Resources Agency  
1416 Ninth Street, Room 1311  
Sacramento, California 95814

Patricia Schifferle  
Assistant to the Speaker  
State Capitol, Room 440  
Sacramento, California 95814